



MID-WILLAMETTE HOMELESS INITIATIVE

CO-LEADERS

Keizer
Mayor Cathy Clark

Marion County

Commissioner Janet Carlson

Polk County

Commissioner Jennifer Wheeler

Salem

Mayor Anna Peterson

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Area Cities and Counties Collaborate on Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative

Salem, OR – The number of people who are homeless throughout Marion and Polk counties is on the rise and local city and county leaders are joining forces to help generate solutions. Civic leaders are in the process of formally establishing the Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative which will strive to help address some of the fundamental issues facing homeless people in the broader Salem-Keizer metro area and across Marion and Polk Counties.

“This is a pressing and complex issue that warrants a strong, community partnership to find solutions,” said Salem Mayor Anna Peterson. “This collaborative approach will increase our success.”

The task force begins next month and continues until February 2017, unless additional time is needed. The task force will focus on the homeless problem in cities and counties; lack of affordable housing; best practices for reducing chronic homelessness; current available services; impacts on public safety and business; and potential revenue sources. Contributing factors such as mental illness, addiction, lack of education and the need for transportation, as well as the challenges of unique populations such as youth and/or veterans will also be addressed.

Structure

The task force will be led by Salem Mayor Anna Peterson, Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark, Marion County Commissioner Janet Carlson and Polk County Commissioner Jennifer Wheeler. Each jurisdiction will appoint up to five community members to serve on the task force with expertise in the diverse and complex factors affecting homelessness.

Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark said, “By coming together to learn more about the needs of homeless members of our communities, we can leverage resources, build relationships, and create opportunities for practical and effective pathways to connect people with housing and other services they may need.” She continued, “We have a model of success with the Marion County Reentry Initiative, tailoring our efforts to make a real difference in supporting a commitment to long term success. I believe that we can bring that same can-do spirit into the Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative.”

Task Force Members

Community and civic leaders have indicated their willingness to serve on the committee:

City of Keizer (pending February 1, 2016 council approval)

Councilor Kim Freeman, City of Keizer
Patty Ignatowski, Business Representative, rental properties owner and realtor
Verena Wessel, Social Services Representative
Shaney Starr, Director of Strategic Initiatives for Dick Withnell

Marion County (pending January 27, 2016 board approval)

Bruce Bailey, Union Gospel Mission
Gladys Blum, Gladys Blum Real Estate
Sheriff Jason Myers, Marion County
Jon Reeves, Mid-Valley Community Action Agency

Polk County (appointed January 6, 2016)

Steve Bobb, Sr, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Sheriff Mark Garton, Polk County
Heidi Mackay, West Salem Business Association
Irma Oliveros, Salem-Keizer School District

City of Salem (appointed January 11, 2016)

Councilor Warren Bednarz, City of Salem
Ron Hays, Mountain West Investments-Mission Advancement
Judge David Leith, Marion County Circuit Court
Chief Jerry Moore, City of Salem Police Department

“We’re so pleased to have assembled this accomplished group of community leaders who are invested in improving the lives of residents in our communities,” said Polk County Commissioner Jennifer Wheeler. “People must have affordable, stable housing to be able to exit poverty and become self-sufficient. The collaborative approach to this challenging issue is the right start and I am eager to be a part of the process.”

Funding

“There's quite a network of local, state and federal funds as well as private foundations and investment resources,” said Marion County Commissioner Janet Carlson. “One of the goals of the initiative will be to identify and seek out diversified support.”

Funding currently used to address homelessness includes the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnerships, Continuum of Care, Emergency Solutions Grants, Shelter Plus Care, and Supportive Housing Program, all of which are supported by federal government funds.

Next Steps

The first meeting of the task force is scheduled for Wednesday, February 17, 2016, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Anderson Room at the Salem Library located at 585 Liberty Street SE in Salem, Oregon. The meeting is open to the public. The task force will begin reviewing local data and current available services, as well as assess gaps in service and prioritize needs.

Information

For more information regarding the Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative, contact:

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